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Using visual culture to address gender expectations in middle school art education:

Visual art curriculum design based on the Manga *Ranma 1/2*

A Thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of
Art Education at Virginia Commonwealth University.

by

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December, 2006

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Abstract

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By Ting-yu Chen, Master of Art Education

A Thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Art Education at Virginia Commonwealth University.

Virginia Commonwealth University, 2006

Major Director: Dr. Pamela G. Taylor
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In this thesis, I identify and explore approaches to middle school art curricula that address the cultural expectations of gender in visual culture media. I use images from the Japanese comic Manga: *Ranma 1/2* to develop units of instruction with goals of engaging students in relating the study of art to their visual culture outside the classroom. The unit has three lessons that deal with cultural expectations of gender to help students become aware of understand gender differences in contemporary society. In the lessons, students examine how the Manga characters are depicted differently according to the character's gender. Also, the teacher utilizes feminist pedagogy which considers how educators and students can work in a classroom with less power struggles. Educators provide students space to let them open-minded to have conversation in the classroom. Through sharing

personal experience and interacting with classmates and teachers, students may owing to the empower activity to get more confidence in their academic studies.

Introduction

Visual culture has a significant influence on students' understandings of the norms of culture and society around them. Freedman (1994) observed that although students accept a huge number of popular images in visual culture, they do not really pay attention to how they are influenced by visual culture images. Freedman also advised art educators to think about how to utilize the creative idea of visual culture to help students comprehend the diverse family, social, and cultural issues around them.

The early research pointed out that gender differences are not just different because of physiology, but also due to the societal expectations of how people act properly in accordance with their biological gender (Mead, 1935). Some feminists have explored whether these gender issues and societal expectations promoted stereotypes and misconceptions of gender (Beauvoir, 1974/1949). To help students have better understanding of how the societal expectations of gender affect them, and help them determine the root of their bias, the theories of feminist pedagogy suggested by Shrewsbury (1987), Maher (1987) and Sandell (1991) provide many suggestions for incorporating feminist pedagogy into teaching.

The purpose of the Unit plan featured in this thesis is to address feminist pedagogical strategies in classroom practice through visual culture materials, specifically the Japanese manga comic *Ranma 1/2* image reading. After the teacher leads students to

these manga images, the art curriculum will stimulate students' strengths and self-awareness to explore how gender expectations affect them. Through the lesson plans, the teacher leads students to read, analyze, and categorize the selected manga images from *Ranma 1/2*, encouraging students to reflect on their experience with gender bias around them. Finally, the class empowers students to deal with the dilemmas that arise in their interests and in the cultural expectations within their friendships, family relationships and community. Through the art study process, students will have more awareness that the media influence their gender stereotypes¹.

Chapter 1: Literature Review

Gender-related societal expectations

Some school teachers and parents have different expectations for boys and girls (Levitin & Chananie, 1972). Some students complain about the unequal expectations and treatment by their teachers and parents between themselves, their classmates, and their siblings of the opposite sex (Orenstein, 1994).

Colebrook (2004) defined gender as socialization and stereotyping in human cultures which causes people to distinguish gender between *masculine* and *feminine*. It is important to know that people have different definitions of *gender*. In my thesis, when I talk about gender, I consider the concept of gender to be not only a biological matter, but also “the social construction of sex” (Colebrook, 2004, p. 9).

Some children’s play is a direct reflection of what they have learned from their society about gender roles. Maher and Ward (2001) stated that as young children become aware of gender stereotypes, they adapt their cultural expectations to identity with different gender roles. When children play with peers, they also learn how to adapt to different gender roles based on their cultural expectations. In addition, being from different cultures and races may affect how children learn about different genders.

The transition from thinking about gender differences as physical to thinking about them as societal culminated in the 1960s in the West. Colebrook (2004) stated “a concern with gender is a peculiarly modern and western phenomenon—that it is only with the advent of feminism and the demand for equal rights that we started to think

about gender, sexual difference or the relation between male and female” (p. 1). Before the 1960s, most scholars considered that the differences in behavior between males and females resulted from physiology and natural differences. This goes back at least two thousand years, to Aristotle’s describing that “the female is a female by virtue of a certain lack of qualities” (as cited in Beauvoir, 1974/1949, p. xviii). Women were considered to be born weak, not because of society but because of their nature. During this time, people did not consider the societal influence on gender roles (Beauvoir, 1974/1949).

Since the 1960s and 1970s, feminist scholars have argued against the unfairness in treatment between males and females. However, there are still many disputes about how biology affects and defines gender in the society that people live in (Beauvoir, 1974/1949). For instance, in some cultures, males are taught to be aggressive while females are guided to be passive: Feminist scholars advocated that the gender differences were also influenced by societies, customs, and cultures.

The American anthropologist Margaret Mead provided strong evidence that societies have the capability to influence gender behavior according to the dominant values of the society. In her article about non-Western societies published in 1935, she observed the three societies: Arapesh, Mundugumor, and Tchambuli. The findings of her study showed that in these three societies, both male and female form their personalities according to their cultural expectations. For instance, in Tchambuli, females take dominant positions, independence and responsibility for their families, while males take less duty and have the habit of relying on others. With the materials that she

collected, Mead concluded that masculinity and femininity were not caused by biology but by intensive “social conditioning” (p. 38) connected with gender.

Some feminist scholars tried to determine the influence of gender expectation on personal identity. In *The Second Sex*, Beauvoir (1974/1949) expressed that human beings not only acted upon what their biology dictated, but also were taught to obey customs, taboos, laws, and so forth that construct their society. In addition, Beauvoir claimed that “One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman” (1974/1978, p. 301). This demonstrated that people were not born with a natural, mental, or economic destiny, based on sex; rather, societal influences shaped them. Moreover, Beauvoir recorded that gender differences between boys and girls seem to have been decided in early infancy. But when comparing the influence of nature and culture on males and females, how females expressed themselves in a society was more likely defined by the civilization’s idea of feminine (1974/1949).

Relationship between visual culture and gender expectations

With the flourishing development of mass media, children today receive a multitude of visual images not only from fine art but also from folk art and popular art. These visual images are “increasingly understood as infused into daily life” (Freedman, 2003, p. 1). Duncum (2001) explained *visual* more relates to visible artifacts, while *culture* is considered the context and text of the artifacts. Meanwhile, the idea of art would not only be fine art but also the “non-art,” or, in other words, visual culture (Gaudelius & Speirs, 2002, p. 15). Visual culture is a social-centered art education that

considers human contemporary life, including gender, class, and race. Homer (1998) announced that visual culture caused a “new visuality” (p. 7) which considers that visual images and texts depend on a huge amount of visual and auditory sensory input.

Involved everywhere in children’s daily life, visual images influence how children think about the things around them. The formats of visual culture cover numerous visual images, such as fine arts, many kinds of image and sound in movies, mass media, malls, public art, buildings, amusement parks, sculpture gardens, the Internet, architecture, magazines, cartoons, comics, film, computer games, Manga, toy design, advertising, television programming, fashion design, craft art, and a variety of digital technologies (Burton, 2004; Freedman, 2003; Gaudelius & Speirs, 2002; Rogoff, 2000). Exposure to media is increasing while the message in this media changes. Meanwhile, “[t]he visual arts are expanding not only in their form, but in their influence through connections to the range of social issues, including issues not always thought of as social in character, such as ecology and conception of self” (Freedman, 2003, p. 1). Visual culture reflects upon social and cultural values.

Freedman (2003) stated that “art education [is] a professional field that influences all levels of education and is a form of social production tied to larger symbolic practices of visual culture”(p. xii). Therefore, I think the value of patriarchy in our society is also reflected in such visuals as Manga.

Art educators should contribute to the transformation of the common visual culture that influences social changes (Feldman, 1996) because some of the students’ works of art embody the semiotic symbols of visual signifiers. For example, some

children will dress up as animation characters to pretend they have the same powers as the animation characters. Such semiotic icons enable students to show their personal identity in terms of gender, sexuality, and class that may relate to social issues.

Freedman (1994) advocated that “the future of art education will depend on teaching visual culture and interpreting vital social issues such as those concerning gender in school” (p. 168). Feminist pedagogy provides an ideal guideline for art educators to inspire students to consider these different multicultural perspectives, and to create an open, welcoming classroom environment.

What is Feminist pedagogy?

In 1792, Mary Wollstonecraft published *A vindication of the rights of woman*, that questioned the inequitable situation between males and females in Western societies. By the twentieth century, feminist scholars were concerned with the issue of how to eliminate gender inequality and its propagation in society. Many others believed that feminists focused on showing how women were better than men. In the 1970s the second wave of feminist scholars was more focused on gender equality. According to Van Reeuwijk’s (1990) studies:

Admittedly there are many feminists who call for an extreme feminine perspective, believing that the female viewpoint is superior to the male viewpoint. Much of the literature of the sixties and seventies in feminist scholarship certainly pointed to this end. However, since some of the dust has settled, feminists of the eighties and nineties speak from a less aggravated spot and are urging for a standard that is based on equality and fairness. (as cited in Clark, 1996, p. 42)

In the beginning, feminists did not have their own educational philosophy, but that was changed in the 1960s. Weiner (1991) stated that:

[The] interest in feminist pedagogy has arisen from concerns of feminist school teachers wishing to address gender issues in their classrooms and the parallel though not identical interests of feminist tutors involved in the expansion of Women's Studies programmes in North American colleges and universities. (p. 125)

In the 1980s, some educator started to consider how feminist theory could be applied in K-12 schools. Subsequently, part of the feminist educators detected that the critical pedagogy which Paulo Freire proposed “provides a historically situated example of a critical pedagogy² [in the United States]” (Weuker, 1991, p. 118). Weiler (1991) stated that “feminist educators often cite Freire as the educational theorist who comes closest to the approach and goals of feminist pedagogy” (p. 118). The similarity between feminist pedagogy and critical pedagogy is that both of them consider that humans are undergoing “oppression, consciousness, and historical change”² (Weiler, 1991, p. 118).

According to Shrewsbury (1987), the purpose of feminist pedagogy is to consider the relationship between the teachers' and students' interactions and classroom practice, and to examine whether the teaching strategies and media can meet the desired objective and outcome. Middleton (1993) argued against the view of feminist pedagogy as a form of student-centered pedagogy, though feminist pedagogy values both children and teachers' personal knowledge. She encouraged exploring “the patterns of power-relations” (p. 131) so that students could develop an understanding of oppressed and

marginalized groups. These goals are not about simply allowing children to freely express themselves without any interaction to others, but about allowing them to explore different topics through classroom dialogue and conversation.

Feminist pedagogy as empowerment

Empowerment is one of the steps in the process to make feminist pedagogy meaningful (Shrewsbury, 1987). Solomon (1976) defined empowerment as “a process whereby persons who belong to a stigmatized social category throughout their lives can be assisted to develop and increase skill in the exercise of interpersonal influence and the performance of valued social roles” (as cited in Carlton-LaNey & Andrews, p. 108). Solomon views empowerment as a means to help marginalized people improve their own lives.

In a feminist pedagogy classroom, “[t]eachers and students should become empowered through their own development of expertise rather than reliance on information of (outside) authorities” (Sandell, 1991, p. 182). Brady (1995) sees the educator’s role as one who teaches empowerment. The teacher “encourages children to look at the world and make their own decisions, to ask questions, and live with their choices” (p. 84). Shrewsbury (1987) stated that “empowerment has been most frequently discussed” (p. 8), when educators apply feminist pedagogy in their classrooms. One of the reasons is that feminist pedagogy engages with Paulo Friere’s education philosophy³ which values dialogical education. The motivation of the class

can activate “energy, capacity and potential” (Shrewsbury, 1987, p. 8) in classroom learning.

Feminist pedagogy strategies for empowerment in the classroom

Shrewsbury (1987) claimed that empowerment activities can engage students’ formal knowledge with new concepts learned in the classroom. Students may combine hypotheses with real life experiences by sharing experiences in open-minded conversations. In order to have these conversations, students need to be guided in how to analyze and incorporate their experiences in the classroom, which empowers students with the awareness that their knowledge is valuable.

Gore (2003) wrote that when putting empowerment into practice in pedagogy, lesson plans have to pay attention to two concepts. First, educators read the contexts of the artworks which include the background, the media, the content of each object inside the pictures (p. 345) and find out what kind of information inside the image could be used to stimulate students to think and then empower students to have positive thinking. Secondly, the curriculum designer prepares “better guidance for actions” (p. 345) for the teachers or students who are to be empowered.

Shrewsbury (1987) offers six strategies for educators to “accomplish the empowerment” of both teachers and students:

1. Enhance the students’ opportunities and abilities to develop their thinking about the goals and objects they wish and need to accomplish individually and collectively.
2. Develop the students’ independence (from formal instructors) as learners
3. Enhance the stake that everyone has in the success of a course and there by

- make clear the responsibility of all member of the class for the learning of all.
4. Develop skills of planning, negotiating evaluation and decision making.
 5. Reinforce of enhance the self-esteem of class member by the implicit recognition that they are sufficiently competent to play a role in course development and are able to be change agents.
 6. Expand the students' understanding of the subject matter of the course and of the joy and difficulty of intense intellectual activity as they actively consider learning goal and sequences. (1987, p.8-9)

Based on Shrewsbury's six strategies, the power structure between educators and students is very subtle. Before starting a new unit, educators have to construct a sequence of lessons according to students' basic ideas about the objectives. Educators set the objectives to help both individual students and peer groups to fulfill personal needs. Teachers should also think about how to challenge and stimulate students to enhance the students' individual abilities.

Shrewsbury (1987) suggested providing both students and teachers a "liberatory environment" (p. 6) for learning. Feminist pedagogy tends to reform the traditional learning field to be an ecological and holistic learning environment. Teachers and students can learn from each other; students no longer just relay the knowledge that has been passed on to them. Students should be offered a chance to conduct independent research under teachers' supervision. Educators should encourage students to take risks, explore new ideas, and make clear statements to class members about how they are going to approach their investigation.

Students need to have self-esteem and learn how to be responsible for their own decisions. Teachers and students should respect the individual uniqueness of each other, causing students to worry less about not being accepted by teachers or peers. Without

fear of being criticized by others, “[teachers and students]...work together to accomplish mutual or shared goals and to help each other reach individual goals” (Shrewsbury, 1987, p. 7). In a feminist classroom, teachers and students work on minimizing power struggles and gender biases that result from stereotypes. Additionally, they participate in deconstructing the society which has been constructed by dominance. The purpose of feminist pedagogy is to help students analyze diverse relationships and issues surrounding individuals. Consequently, the “issues have personal meaning at various stages of [students’] growth and development” (Maher, 1987, p. 188).

Although personal growth needs to be considered, learning how to collaborate with others is important as well. Enhancing teachers’ and students’ ability to plan, negotiate, and make reasonable and logical decisions is necessary in feminist pedagogy. Both educators and students have to understand their roles in the classroom and then realize they play an important role in the classroom. Empowering students to overcome pressure in the classroom can help them “find their own voices” (Shrewsbury, 1987, p. 9) and “enable individuals to find communion with others” (Shrewsbury, 1987, p. 9).

Some communities expect boys and girls express themselves differently and conform to the societal values and behave according to gender expectations. According to Sandell (1991), art educators can apply feminist pedagogical approaches to examine these expectations and help students link their emotional imagination and abstract idea of art with artistic and critical replay in the art classroom.

In teachers’ and students’ interaction, Sandell (1991) observed that when teachers practice feminist pedagogy in the classroom, they work like a “simultaneous translator”

(p. 183). Teachers are not simply passing their knowledge to students, but also helping students, based on the students' individual life experiences, to consider questions and then explore new knowledge. In feminist pedagogical practice, educators are encouraged not only to bring technology/media into the classroom, but also to offer gender related subjects that are relevant to students' lives. Educators can help students learn from the opposite sex as well.

The feminist pedagogy method gives students an opportunity to learn more about themselves. Sandell (1991) suggested two methods with this goal: *self-as-subject* and *self-as-inquirer*. *Self-as-subject* means that students and teachers connect the content of visual art to themselves and make plans and reflections based on "any art problem" (p. 184) which focuses on personal interest and issues based on their "memory, observation or imagination" (p. 184). The method of *self-as-inquirer* offers both art teacher and students efficient techniques and critical skills when they make their own art work. Sandell stated that through this practice, students would be empowered and "take on the role of art creators, art critics, art historians and aestheticians" (p. 184).

For instance, when an art educator introduces Western art, "[b]ecause much of Western art's subject matter is personally qualitative, art educators can adopt feminist pedagogy's goal of having students relate the subject matter to aspects of their own lives" (Sandell, 1991, p. 184). When artists are planning their works of art, no matter what period of time they live in, they are affected by their society's values and beliefs. Because of this, personal expression is a significant part of feminist pedagogy. This approach can be incorporated into the art classroom. After students explicate an idea,

educators can use feminist pedagogy to encourage students to examine their external society and combine it with students' experiences. Thus, when students create their works of art, the content of their art may be more meaningful to them.

Maher (1987) suggests her own feminist pedagogy methods in social studies, some of which can be used in art education, too. First, teachers pose questions which stimulate students to compare their knowledge to different concepts in non-Western cultures studied in the class. According to how students respond, teachers keep presenting more questions in class discussion. Finally, the teacher will use situations from various non-Western cultures to help student formulate questions. According to students' personal experiences and responses, teacher and students analyze their hypotheses together.

During these exchanges, educators can also "draw comparisons to people's lives and choices today and see that gender, class, and culture shape their own world as well" (Maher, 1987, p. 190). For instance, educators can talk about people's clothing design at that time, and ask students to compare class, gender, and other aspects of society. Based on the class discussion, the teacher and students write hypotheses about why the clothing was designed in that particular manner and explain that to others. Furthermore, the educator encourages students to express their perception of the event. Empowered students may talk about their personal perspectives about gender. Weiler (1996) agreed with Maher that educators can share personal experiences or other stories in the classroom, meanwhile encouraging students to share personal feelings.

When educators put feminist pedagogy into practice, combining the methods provided by Shrewsbury, Sandell, and Maher, they should always focus on making connections between their students, the objects of study, and the community. When teachers inquire about students' opinions, students should have sufficient space to express their personal ideas. In addition, educators should value students' own experiences. Finally, feminist pedagogy offers both male and female students opportunities to go beyond the societal constructions and empower them to create works of art that have personal meaning.

Chapter 2: The Manga subject analysis

What is Manga? What is it for? What can we learn from Manga?

Manga is a Japanese word meaning “comics” which is used in English to mean “Japanese comics”. Originally, in the 12th century, the Japanese had their own style with Manga-like images: *Choju-giga* (the animal scrolls) which were “humorous pictures of birds and animals” (Toku, 2001, p. 13). Japanese artist Yonesawa (1997) described how, after World War II, Japanese Manga was influenced by U.S. comics and Disney animation (as cited in Toku, 2001, p. 13). At this time, the Japanese artists studied the principles of design from the West and combined these elements with traditional Giga pictures. Ultimately, they combined traditional Japanese concepts with Western elements of design to develop the Japanese style of comics known as Manga.

Kinsella (2000) described how Manga is mostly “a medium” (p. 3), depicting either people’s real life or science fiction fantasy. It is similar to television, books or movies in its portrayal of people’s “everyday life” (p. 4). When Japanese artists create Manga, most of their storylines, narratives and content are based on Japanese cultural and social situations. Going back to the 18th century, Hokusai Katsushika (1760-1849) started to illustrate Manga to meet the readers’ needs, making the comics age-appropriate (Toku, 2002). Even now, Manga can be grouped according to psychological and cultural expectations for different genders and ages. There are five main Manga categorizations

groups: Kodomo (children's Manga), Shonen Manga (teenage boys' Manga), Shojo Manga (teenage girls' Manga), Seinen Manga (adult Manga), and Josei (adult women's Manga).

Why is Manga such a popular media form in Japan? Many people use Manga as a way to escape the pressures of everyday Japanese life. Gravett (2004) explained that in Japanese society, people have to strictly follow traditional concepts of honor, family and how society asks people to behave. Reading Manga becomes an activity in which the reader can provisionally withdraw himself or herself from society to an imaginary world. Manga books show everything from daily life to adventures, from romances to fighting, from environment to politics. Also, reading Manga can be a type of self-help. When people have struggles in their lives, different styles of Manga provide them with a way to find solutions.

Importantly, Japanese Manga is created to entertain Japanese people, and contains a significant amount of folk stories and jokes. Initially, the Manga industry was not like other Japanese industries selling their products internationally (Gravett, 2004). "Manga are spreading beyond the subculture cool of club flyers, computer games, music videos and fashion mannequins"(Gravett, 2004, p. 152). Businessmen and publishers have started to think about selling Japanese Manga abroad. Most of the images and concepts transmitted in the Manga are "culturally specific and rooted in shared values, created without regard to possible foreign responses to their treatment of sex, Christianity and

other sensitive subjects” (Gravett, 2004, p. 152). This means that Manga is not designed to target a Western audience.

As a result, a non-Japanese reader might be unable to relate to many of the Manga characters or situations. After the Japanese Manga is exported to foreign countries, the cultural and custom differences can cause “culture barriers” (Gravett, 2004, p. 154). Since the Japanese card game, movie and animation character Pokemon became popular with American children, and “the Pokemon phenomenon exploded” (Foster, 2002) in the United States, the Japanese animation and Manga business started to grow quickly, and more Westerners have encountered Manga. When non-Japanese read Manga they see cultural differences which could confuse them; this is true in particular for children looking at Manga. For example a student at the University of California in Berkeley expressed that "anime and Manga have a little more adult story lines" and, as with the cultures, “the humor is very different" (Foster, 2002).

The other problem is that some of the comics from Japan include elements that Western cultures consider to be inappropriate references to sex or violence. Without instruction or guidance, children may misunderstand Manga’s societal context and be negatively influenced. For instance, in Japan, there is a communal bath house which is separated into two huge rooms. Men and women go separately into different public baths. In Japan, people have strict manners associated with entering this public area. Sometimes, Manga might include the public house background in the storytelling.

Without cultural familiarity, scenes from a bath house could seem shocking to a non-Japanese, who might consider the Manga subject improper for young people.

Despite this, Manga carries profound cultural messages such as the fact that in Asia, people are taught to be socialized and value the extended family above personal goals (Pedersen, 2004). The Manga media can provide art educators in the U.S. with a cross-cultural resource for teaching not just Japanese culture, but Japanese culture as it relates to the students' own cultures (Toku, 2001).

Toku (2001) suggested that, considering children's artistic development, an art class that integrates Manga can help children broaden their "visual thinking skills" (p. 16) including expression, observation, and critical thinking. Drawing Manga is like drawing comics, because students are not only depicting a picture, but they also need to think of characters, a storyline to portray, and conversations and narratives. Feminist pedagogical strategies encourage educators examine questions from a theme, and welcome students to have dialogue sharing these experiences relate to a theme to their teacher and peers. The kind of information exchange will help them to aware what are other feels. After they get information from each other, using their imagination and freely choosing who they want to be in the Manga-making activity can benefit the art curriculum. The kind of interaction with others may increase their confidence; moreover empower students in their academic studies.

Ranma 1/2 is a Manga series by Rumiko Takahashi, which I will present as an example for middle school art class learning. *Ranma 1/2* was started in Japan in 1987 and has been translated into English since 1996. In the curriculum discussion, I am referring to the English version. *Ranma 1/2* is not Feminist, but the Manga characters often act contrary to Japanese gender expectations.

Introduce the Manga subject: *Ranma 1/2*

Ranma 1/2 was created by a female artist, Rumiko Takahashi. Her Manga volumes are categorized as Shonen Manga (teenage boys' Manga). In most of her Manga volumes, she is good at “confounding and confusing sexual stereotypes” (Cravett, 2004, p. 81). Her Manga characters often act contrary to Japanese gender expectation. Some female characters have masculine looks or power. As a result of the funny and outstanding narratives in her Manga works, her books have a large teenage male following, but also have a huge number of teenage female fans (Cravett, 2004).

One possible reason that *Ranma 1/2* is so popular is that the stories not only include elements of fighting, but also mock the romantic form of Shoujo Manga (teenage girls' Manga) and the societal expectations in Japanese society. In *Ranma 1/2* the background setting is a typical example of Japanese people's daily life, but the characters and storyline involve imagination and fantasy that would never be seen in Japan. For example, females in Japan are supposed to be gentle and soft. In the *Ranma 1/2*, the female

characters are visually portrayed as the traditional idea of feminine, but the storyline or dialogue might depict these female characters with more power than the male characters.

The stories of *Ranma 1/2* describe the daily life of the main character, Ranma Saotome, his fiancée, their families, classmates, and community. But, the point which attracts the reader's attention is how Ranma is different from other people. Ranma is a sixteen-year-old boy who looks like a normal teenage boy. However, he changes his physiological gender between male and female, depending on the temperature of the water he touches. He was not born with this condition. When Ranma went to China for martial arts training, he visited the Thousand Spell Springs. He fell into a pond that had a *girl spell* on it. As a consequence, he got the ability to transform between male and female. Also, because he lives in a very strict society, he had to learn how to approach the societal expectations of a different gender. The ways he learned how to switch between masculine and feminine becomes a main point in *Ranma 1/2*.

Japanese culture is very strict in its demands on gender-specific manners; for instance, females and males are expected to use different forms of speech and women should not walk in front of men. When Ranma turned into a female, he still acted masculine, and he was corrected by family members. When he turned into a girl, people around him always reminded him that he had to learn to behave as a girl should. After a lot of training, in some circumstances, Ranma's attitude toward other people changes along with his subconscious when he turns into a female. He didn't know how to act

like a girl, but because his biological situation and the society expect changes, Ranma had to change his attitude to communicate with people. The author Rumiko Takahashi depicts and seems to mock the ideology of different genders and stereotypes in Japanese society and turns it into a comedy.

Chapter 3: Three lessons in the Unit plan

Topic

The main idea of this curriculum is to use the Manga: *Ranma 1/2* studies to engage students in reflecting on the ways gender expectations and stereotypes affect their daily decision making. For this unit of art curriculum, I selected two sets of images from *Ranma 1/2* for lesson one. The two sets of images will focus on Ranma's physical transformation and his behavior changes, and how people change their attitude to communicate with him. In lesson two, students will create their own Manga character. In lesson three, according to the characteristics of their character, students will develop a four paneled Manga that depicts some of their own experiences with gender stereotypes.

Student Group and Community

This project is designed for eighth grade students. I suggest that teacher write parents concerning the unit plan.

Suggested teaching material

Go office (2002). *More how to draw Manga Vol. 2: Penning characters*. Japan: Graphic-sha Publishing Co., Ltd.

Iizuka, H. & Sumoto, A. (Eds.). (2006). *Manga artist academy*. (M. Ihara Trans.). San Francisco, CA:VIZ Media, LLC. (Original work published 2000)

Matsumoto, A. (2003). *How to draw Manga Vol. 8: Super basics*. Japan: Graphic-sha Publishing Co., Ltd.

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Lesson 1: Introduce *Ranma1/2* and characters: Male Ranma? Female

Ranma?

- I. Objectives/ Expected Learner Outcomes
 - A. Students will become acquainted with what Manga.
 - B. Through the Manga images reading, students will explain to each other how different cultures have their own gender expectation and stereotypes.
 - C. Based on Manga reading and classroom discussions, students will express their observation of gender expectations in *Ranma1/2*.
- II. Standards of Education
 - A. The National Standards for Visual Arts Education –visual arts (5-8)
Content Standard #6: Making connections between visual arts and other disciplines.
 - B. Virginia Visual Arts Standards of Learning

8.17 The student will investigate and discuss the use of social, cultural, and historical context as they contribute to meaning in a work of art.

III. Key terms/vocabulary to be introduced

Manga- a Japanese way to describe comic books. Manga is similar to television, books or movies in its portrayal of people's everyday life. Manga drawing has specific style to portray characters, backgrounds and words.

Gender expectation- male and females expressed themselves in a society are more likely defined by the civilization's idea of masculine and feminine.

Gender stereotype- In media, most of them portray the gender stereotype focus on how female image is depicting on the TV or magazine...etc. For instance, female character always be portrayed as less smart, passive and object which dominated by men character.

IV. Time required

One section/ 50 minutes.

V. Demonstration/guided practice

- A. Show posters with two selected pairs of images focusing on Ranma's facial expressions, hand gestures, posture and eye contact from Manga *Ranma 1/2*. (as shown in Appendix A).
- B. Teacher posts on the board the selected images from *Ranma 1/2*, which focus on Ranma and other people's interaction. In these images, the teacher uses a paper to cover the character Ranma. (as shown in Appendix B)

VI. Supplies and equipment

Working sheets and Pencil.

VII. Teaching procedure

Time

allotment

5 min Motivation and explanation:

A. Teaching the Manga subject

T: "Has anybody ever read comic books before?"

T: "Can somebody describe what you have read in the comics?"

T: "Has anybody read Manga before?"

(If students respond that they have experience in reading Manga, the teacher may encourage them to describe their definition of Manga.

Teacher writes down students' experiences on the blackboard.)

T: “Manga is a Japanese way to describe comic books. Manga is similar to television, books or movies in its portrayal of people’s everyday life. Manga drawing has a specific style to portray characters, backgrounds and words.”

T: “Before we start to learn how to draw our Manga, our first activity is going to be to look at some pictures which are selected from a Manga named *Ranma1/2*. Has anybody read *Ranma1/2* before?”

T: “The plots which attracted me most in *Ranma1/2* are about how Ranma has the ability to change his physical appearance after he touches different temperatures of water. When Ranma touches hot water, he turns into a boy. Alternatively, when he touches cold water, he gets a girl’s body. When Ranma interchanges between bodies, how other people treat him/her will change as well, do you know why?”

5min B. Explain the working process

Students will be separated into several groups.

T: “In this class, we are going to read two sets of images from *Ranma1/2*”. Teacher passes out to each student these worksheets (as shown in Appendix A and Appendix B). You are going to work in groups to complete these worksheets.

T: In work sheet A, I would like each group to examine how Ranma's facial expressions, eye contact, hand gestures and posture differ when he is male and when he is female. Write down your observations.

T: "Worksheet B is one page which was taken from the *Ranma 1/2*. On this page, you see Ranma and his/her interaction with others. I covered the figure of Ranma. (as shown in Appendix B). Each group, use your observations and imagination to determine: in what kind of situation is Ranma male and in what kind of situation is Ranma female and write down the numbers. After you complete worksheet B, please write down your group's statement about why your group thinks in certain situations that Ranma is male or female.

30min

C. Working period

- i. Groups work together and write down their opinions from reading the two worksheets. From their observations, students express their conclusions.
- ii. After students finish group work, they add their personal statement about what would happen, if they had the ability to change to the opposite gender? What would be the best part?

- iii. “I would like you all to think about how it would be if you had that kind of ability, what would happen to you? Besides the changes in your body, what other kinds of change would happen? Why? What kind of benefits would there be for you turning into the opposite gender? What kind of gender expectations would you be asked to follow?”

10min

D. Closure

- i. Teacher invites four student representatives from different groups to report their observations from worksheets A and B and express the group conclusions.
- ii. Teacher takes notes for each group’s statement and carefully analyzes what kind of bias to gender, subtle or obvious, appears in students’ conversations.
- iii. T: “Some of the messages transmitted by media are full of Gender stereotype, do you know what kind of common stereotypes surround us?”
- iv. Teacher records the conversation with students and collects their personal statements and art journals from the lesson.
- v. Teacher informs students that in the next class, they are going to learn how to develop a Manga character. Before the next

class, students need to do independent study about how gender expectations affect personal decisions and think about personal experience.

- vi. T: In the future two lessons, we are going to draw our own Manga, before we start, we need to make a plan for the story of the Manga. Story memo is like the scrip for our Manga story.
- vii. Students have to finish the story memo section I: Main character (as shown in Appendix C) and bring it back to the class. Think about what their Manga main character looks like.

VIII. Evaluation Strategies/Criteria

- A. Were the teaching procedures successful in leading students to develop conversation? Why? Did the students feel safe to state their thoughts related to personal experiences about gender expectation?
- B. When students expressed their ideas, what were the other students' responses to the presenter? Why?
- C. How did the work period go?
- D. How will this experience alter the plans for the next lesson?
- E. Compare the conclusion within the four groups. What kinds of content

related to gender need to be discussed further?

- F. After students express their concepts of different genders, what kind of gender bias do they have? Teacher records it and thinks about how to bring the concepts to the next period.

Lesson 2: Create a Manga character

I. Objectives/ Expected Learner Outcomes

- A. Students will be able to explain to each other from their daily observation what kind of gender expectations they believe exist from their family, school, or society.
- B. Based on their discussions and independent research, they can create an imaginary character that embodies personal interests or hopes which might not be expected because of their gender.

II. Standards of Education

A. The National Standards for Visual Arts Education –visual arts (5-8)

Content Standard #3: Choosing and evaluating a range of subject matter, symbols, and ideas

B. Virginia Visual Arts Standards of Learning

- 8.2 The student will further expand and develop the use of the elements of art and the principles of design.

8.18 The student will communicate how personal experiences influence critical judgments about and interpretations of works of art.

III. Key terms/vocabulary to be introduced

Gender expectation- how male and females express themselves in a society is most likely defined by the civilization's idea of masculine and feminine.

Wood figure model: A wooden figure of the human body which shows the proportion of the human body and the joints which we bend that allows humans to move.

Screen tone paper: Patterns are printed on a clear film that has adhesive on one side. There are a variety of patterns of screen tone papers .Using them wisely can create different affects on the image.

Tone: A tone is one of the lighter, darker, or brighter shades of the same color.

IV. Time required

One section/ 50 minutes.

V.Demonstration/guided practice

Show posters that illustrate Manga drawing techniques and styles.

VI.Supplies and equipment

Story memo, Drawing inks, Point dip pens, Manga art paper, Eraser, Scrubber,

Pencil, Wood figure model and Screen tone paper.

VII. Teaching procedure

Time

allotment

5 min A. Review

T: “What did we discuss during the last class?”

S: “We read the images from *Ranma1/2* and examined these images as well.”

T: “Last class, I introduced you to our story memo and Manga script.

You wrote and drew on the *Section I: Main characters* and set up your main character which will show up in your Manga story.

Please put it in front of you.”

5 min B. Instruction

T: “Everybody is going to set up his/her Manga character today. You need to give the character some power beyond his/her gender.

T: “Based on your story memo section I, try to draw a Manga face, creating facial expressions, facial proportion, interests, and draw a full figure and the preferred clothing style on the story memo *Section II: Sketch of the character face/ figure design.*

T: “Before you apply it to the Manga art paper, please draw a rough

sketch on section II of your story memo. Manga need to have colorful characters to make even more apparent the topic of the story.”

T: “After you draw a rough sketch and are satisfied with your character design, you are going to practice how to use point dip pens to apply drawing inks on the Manga art paper.

10 min

C. Demonstrate

- i. Teacher demonstrates the character design elements. It should show the personality, specialty, physical type, style, personal background, and the relationship with others. Taking into account the uniqueness of each character, the teacher shows students how to create a facial expression and facial proportion and how to observe and display the wood figure model and then draws the full figure of the Manga character.
- ii. Teacher demonstrates how to use point dip pens to dip drawing ink and apply it on the Manga art. Using point dip pens, depending on the pressure which is applied by hand, the line can be adjusted to be thick or thin.
- iii. After the teacher completes the character drawing on the Manga art paper, he/she introduces the screen tone papers which

function like transfer stickers.

- iv. T: “Because different screen tones have different patterns, when students apply screen tones to the images, it will create different tones.”
- v. Teacher shows students how to remove the screen tone papers from the package while the screen tone still keeps the backing paper. Teacher traces the part where he/she wants to apply screen tone. Teacher cuts the screen tone and lays it on the part which we want to have screen tone on, uses tone scrubber to rub the screen tone backing paper to the original part. From this we get the texture.

20 min D. Work period

- i. Teacher visits each table. When teacher visits the table, students around the table show teacher their research resources and sketch of their Manga characters and explain their concept of the character individually and their story idea to teacher.
- ii. Other students work on their character design and draw rough sketches. Students practice how to draw lines with point dip pens and attach screen tone paper to their Manga character.

10min E. Closure

- i. Students present their complete pages to class. Students describe what kind of abilities their Manga characters have.
- ii. Teacher posts the following questions on the board. Why do they think the ability is important? Does the ability follow gender expectations or not? What are the limits if people always follow gender expectations from the society? What are the benefits? What makes you think this way? How can this character go beyond gender expectation?
- iii. Teacher assigns students to think about the dialogues in their Manga story. According to students' personal experience in interactions with people around them, such as their family members, school teachers, peers, opposite sex friends, students examine what kind of gender expectation or stereotypes exist. Based on these experiences, students create a story and write it on the *Section III: storyboard* of their story memo.

VII. Evaluation Strategies/Criteria

- A. What are students' reactions and responses in the classroom?
- B. When students practice the point dip pen skill, what kind of difficulties are there?

- C. When students are asked questions, what are their responses? How does it help them to think about the topic of gender expectation?

Lesson 3: My Manga story.

- I. Objectives/ Expected Learner Outcomes
 - A. Students can use the main character which they created to extend dialogues with others.
 - B. Through Manga drawing, students can make the Manga content have personal meaning.
 - C. By considering their main characters, students can draw a complete Manga story with storyline, properly set up portions of panels, words, and word balloons, successfully apply drawing inks with point dip pens and screen point paper.
- II. Standards of Education
 - A. The National Standards for Visual Arts Education –visual arts (5-8)
Content Standard #1: Understanding and applying media, techniques, and processes.
 - B. Virginia Visual Arts Standards of Learning
 - 8.2 The student will further expand and develop the use of the elements of art and the principles of design.

8.16 The student will analyze the effect the elements of art and the principles of design have on the communication of ideas.

8.21 The student will formulate and respond to meaningful questions about works of art, based on observations and interpretations.

III. Key terms/vocabulary to be introduced

Storyboard - development of storyline.

Four Paneled Manga-includes the title of the story, and four pictures with a logical story expansion.

Pictures- portray the object or the figure of characters.

Words- dialogue or onomatopoeia (which is words that imitate nature sounds).

Word Balloons- display words illustrating the content of the panel in the composition directly in the drawing through a conversation balloon, anger and surprise balloon and inner thought and telephone conversation balloon.

Frame-around the pictures.

IV. Time required

Two sections/ 100 minutes.

V. Demonstration/guided practice

A. Show posters with the elements of design specific to the construction of a Manga which include: pictures, words, word bubbles, and frame.

- B. Show posters of point dip pens uses, drawing ink and screen tone paper.
- C. Demonstrate Manga drawing process: introduction, development, climax, and conclusion. Show students the poster of worksheet B (as shown in Appendix B).

VI. Supplies and equipment

Drawing inks and point dip pens, and grid paper, Manga art paper, Manuscript paper, Ruler, Pencil, Eraser, and Screen ton paper.

VII. Teaching procedure

Time

allotment

5 min

A. Review

T: “Last class, we completed our character design on section II of your story memo.

T: “Also I asked all of you to finish section III on your story memo, which was based on your personal experiences, at home.”

5min

B. Introduction

T: “Today each of you will draw one page of a four paneled Manga. In these pages, you will include a complete storyboard, words, and word balloons. Also, you have to use the Manga drawing technique.

- 10min C. Demonstration
- i. Teacher explains that four Paneled Manga is a kind of Manga format which includes the title of the story, and four pictures with a logical story expansion.
 - ii. Teacher posts worksheet B and discusses the elements exist on the page of Manga are pictures, words, word balloons, and frame. Teacher describes these elements to students. He/she then gives an example to show students how to display these elements on a Manga page.
 - iii. Teacher introduces what kind of elements will be present on a page of Manga: title, pictures, words, word balloons, and frame.
 - iv. T: “In Manga drawing, artists will, according to their needs, set up the size of each panel, and the width between each panel.”
 - v. When making frames, balloons and lines, always use a ruler or template.
- 70min D. Work Period
- i. Students describe their storyline on their story memo with peers or teacher.

- ii. Student sets up frames, gaps, and panels.
- iii. Students use soft pencils to draw a rough sketch of their storyboard on the Manga art paper.
- iv. Students apply the ink with point dip pen to make a complete page.
- v. Students apply the screen tone paper to make shadows or textures.

20min

E. Closure

- i. Students demonstrate their works of art on the board.
- ii. Each student explains what their story comes from and what kind of power their main characters have.
- iii. Students critique their classmates' works of art and give personal feedback.

VII. Evaluation Strategies/Criteria

- A. To what degree did the planning and teaching support student learning?
- B. Did students fulfill lesson objectives? How do students compose the image elements?
- C. How well did students demonstrate understanding of their own work?
- F. Teacher will collect students' Manga and publish them as a kind of exhibition.

Chapter 4: Discussion and implications

Educators and parents often prohibit children from reading the Manga, rather than guide children to deconstruct and analyze the cultural meaning behind the Manga images (Kinsella, 2000). Because of the controversial nature of Manga content such as dark humor, unrealistic comic violence, and nudity, children reading Manga without a guide might be led in the wrong direction.

Teachers may adopt certain teaching techniques and use carefully-selected Manga⁴ images to guide students in these critical understanding. The lesson plan unit in this thesis draws upon feminist pedagogy to empower students to value and appreciate their own gender and respect the opposite gender through Manga studies. The lesson plans can be combined with different types of instruction including the utilization of interactive computer technology.

It is important to recognize cautionary practices when utilizing Manga material in the art classroom. First of all, the art educator should pay attention to community opinions on cultural subjects. Some more conservative communities might be less likely to accept a lesson such as this. Even though I feel deconstructing Manga images is a valuable activity in art education, not all parents are open to such alternative approaches. Secondly, there are some nude women images in the *Ranma 1/2*, though these relate to their public bath culture and are not “sexual”. However, because of people’s sensitivity to nudity used in public schools, the teacher should not show those

images. Third, the three lessons plans are examples of how art educators may utilize the Manga images to address issues associated with gender.

After the Unit plan studies, students should begin to understand how another culture views gender roles. Students will also read the Manga image and create their own Manga object which has personal meaning. After students create their Manga story, they should be able to appreciate the creativity form of Manga and understand that every group of people has some similar struggles to solve, whether you live in the United States or in Japan. How people in different cultures express and solve their problems might be different, but we should all respect and appreciate these differences.

Moreover, the curriculum may guide students, through personal reflection, to be empowered in the art classroom. This empowerment means students should not lose their self-esteem and uniqueness, but rather should question the meaning hidden behind the media. The teacher can impress upon students that the popular media and society pass certain messages that shape and affect their decisions and values. Educators can help students realize that they have power to make their lives better through a critical approach to media that involves constant reflection and questioning.

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Endnotes

1. About the gender role stereotypes, see Pedersen, P. B. “*110 experiences for multicultural learning*,” 267-273 (Washington, DC, NE: American psychological association, 2004).
2. See Kathleen Weiler “Freire and a feminist pedagogy of difference,” 117-145, in Woyshner, C. A. & Gelfound, H. S. (Eds.) *Minding women: reshaping the educational realm*. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard College, 1988).
3. For a fuller discussion of critical pedagogy by Paulo Freire, see “From pedagogy of the oppressed,” 57-68, in Darder, A. Bltodano, M. & Torres, R. D. (Eds.) *The critical pedagogy reader*.(NY: RoutledgeFalmer, 2003).
4. Like the Motion Picture Association of America’s film rating system, VIZ Media LLC. has established a sequence of Manga rating system. *Ranma1/2* was classified as Teen Plus which is recommended for older teens and adults. More information about VIZ Media LLC. <http://www.viz.com/>

APPENDIX A

Work sheet A

There are three images from *Ranma 1/2*, after read these images, can you tell what the different between male and female.



APPENDIX B

Work sheet B: Male Ranma? Female Ranma?

Date _____ Class NO. _____ Name: _____



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Please fill the blanks below to indicate in which images you think Ranma is male and in which images Ranma is female.

In image number(s) _____, Ranma is male.

In image number(s) _____, Ranma is female.

Why: _____

The preceding image is the original image in work sheet B

The images also can demonstrate to students how to set up manga elements for the four-panel manga.



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Section III: Storyboard

Introduction (The beginning of the story: Who, When, Where)

Development (What happens to the main character. To/With whom)

Climax (What unexpected development occurs?)

Conclusion (The result)

VITA

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